

Scaling up civic food utopias in Australia: The challenges of justice and representation

Kiah Smith PhD 

School of Social Science, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia

Correspondence

Dr. Kiah Smith, School of Social Science, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.

Email: k.smith2@uq.edu.au

Funding information

Australian Research Council,
Grant/Award Number: DE190101126

Abstract

Through the lens of food utopias, this article explores the opportunities and dilemmas experienced by selected civic food networks (CFNs) in Australia as they seek to scale-up from local initiatives, to regional coalitions, to national social movements. Findings from qualitative analysis of key informant interviews indicate the ways that scaling up is both a micro- and macro-level process. While local initiatives focus on different problems (food waste, hunger, health, ecology), establishing shared visions that emphasise systems reform has shaped coalition building and collective action beyond the local. As problem and solution definitions converge and diverge around justice and rights, however, limitations in the representation, positioning and ‘voice’ of marginalised stakeholders – specifically, indigenous people and those most affected by hunger – have emerged. This has opened up new spaces of contestation that today take central place in determining the trajectory of ‘values-based territorial food networks’ in Australia.

KEYWORDS

challenges, civic food networks, collective action, food futures, scale

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) License, which permits use and distribution in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, the use is non-commercial and no modifications or adaptations are made.

© 2022 The Authors. *Sociologia Ruralis* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd on behalf of European Society for Rural Sociology

INTRODUCTION

Transitions to more sustainable and equitable food systems will require transformations into new pathways, which are increasingly dependent on the ability for new visions that provide the ‘seeds of change’ to take root (Folke et al., 2010; Geels & Schot, 2010). This article examines the potential for civic food networks (CFNs) at multiple scales to influence systemic transformations that are deeper, more lasting, more inclusive and more just; a challenge made even more urgent in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, global systems shocks (climate change, economic crisis) and growing hunger (Blay-Palmer et al., 2020; UN DESA, 2020). Food justice is at the heart of this dilemma, considering that despite the growth of ‘values-based territorial food networks’ (VTFNs), massive disparities in food access between and within nations continue (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP & WHO, 2020).

Seen here as a subset of VTFNs, CFNs – including urban agriculture initiatives, food charity networks and food policy councils – often operate within social solidarity economies in which social goals are prioritised over economic growth. Their transformative potential is optimistically understood to stem from their opposition to mainstream food provisioning through logics that (a) redistribute value in market transactions; (b) reorganise producer–consumer relations based on trust and proximity; and (c) engender new forms of reflexivity, social learning and organisation. CFNs tend to also support deeper civic engagement in shaping public opinion, culture, institutions and policies through multiscalar policy advocacy and social movement activism (Renting et al., 2012, p. 300; see also Goodman et al. 2014; Holt-Gimenez & Shattuck, 2011). These are held together by diverse values associated with sustainable food systems, such as ecological integrity, social wellbeing (including health and social justice), economic resilience and ethical governance (see also Atakar & Myers, 2020). Civic food initiatives, coalitions and movements are built and connected across scales, in that community-level initiatives can ‘foster knowledge co-creation and ultimately cement collective action to global pressures’ in turn enhancing sustainability and resilience locally that can facilitate transformations at other scales (Blay-Palmer et al., 2016, p. 27). However, the ways that CFNs can scale into systems that transform the drivers of food system inequality are not well understood. This prompts renewed analysis of the potential and limitations of VTFNs to move from localised efforts to more collective, ‘trans-local’ forms that address the structural causes of food system injustice. Understanding this process is a key focus of this article and requires both unpacking VTFNs imaginative visions – as precursors for transformative action – and a critical lens on whose voices are included (or not), recognising that some groups (particularly indigenous and those who are most ‘food poor’) are often more excluded than others (see Davy, 2016; Richards et al., 2016).

This article seeks to contribute to this literature by examining the challenges faced by Australian CFNs as they progress visions for transformation and opportunities for more collective scaling-up. In Australia, the civic food movement has been steadily growing against a backdrop of increasing public awareness of domestic food insecurity, the impacts of climate change on farmers and lack of co-ordinated food policy-making (Carey et al., 2015; Dixon & Richards, 2016). Experimental local initiatives have proliferated substantially more rapidly than collective governance (i.e., coalitions or movements) at regional or national levels however (Smith, 2019; Lyons et al., 2013). Few Australian studies have examined the challenges and opportunities facing these emerging food networks *across scales*. Adopting Wald and Hill’s (2016, p. 205) assertion that ‘the opportunities of political mobilisation may occur at different scales at different times’, I ask: *How are visions of*

food system transformation constructed by CFNs at different scales (initiative, coalition, social movement) in Australia? What opportunities and challenges exist to strengthen collective food justice in this context?

This article draws on qualitative research conducted with movement leaders in 10 CFNs operating across geographic scales in Australia, outlined in Table 1. These are all contributing experimental solutions to food system reform and thus fit with the overarching notion of ‘VTFN’ developed in the Editorial of this special issue: initiatives are primarily local, coalitions are regional and movements are national. Their values vary across scales and actors, but as I argue later, can be generally seen to have moved away from global ideals of food sovereignty¹ (which has been problematic for coalition and movement building in Australia) towards narratives that emphasise systemic reform, rights and food justice.² They are also understood to be ‘trans-scalar’, in that new values and networks emerge out of the processes through which these territorial actors intersect.³ Each of these CFNs have also identified ‘scaling’ to be a central tension in their work, further cementing scale as an important analytical focus for this article. Following Utting (2015), *scaling* is therefore examined here as both a micro and macro process – it refers to the capacity for affecting values and norms (micro) as well as the capacity for empowerment through collective action, democratic decision-making, the enlargement of public space and public ‘voice’ (macro). Utting (2015) further argues that these micro and macro processes should be integrated if CFNs are to stay true to their values (however defined). In this study, a primary aim is to examine how shared values have been established and negotiated amongst Australian CFNs at different scales (initiative, coalition, social movement), in order to understand how CFNs move from utopian visions to alternative food futures that are viable, replicable, scalable and democratically supported. I am particularly interested in the contested voices shaping the civic food agenda in Australia and the insights they provide for understanding tensions and challenges around scaling up.

The article is organised as follows. First, I present literature on CFNs, transformation and scale, emphasising the need to place common goals and collective action at the centre of any theory of food system transformation. These general concepts are then contextualised with reference to CFNs in Australia. Next follows a brief description of the qualitative research methodology. Findings are then organised along the themes of micro and macro scaling-up. I first map out how (and why) defining ‘fair food’ at the micro level has been strategically important for scaling-up support for CFNs in Australia, a process that has been marked by tensions between those who advocate for food sovereignty and those who seek to progress an agenda of food justice. Second, I consider more closely the challenges involved in establishing this shared agenda. Tensions around the representation and voice of people who most experience poverty and hunger and indigent people point to the need for caution around whose visions of food system transformation are being mobilised. The article concludes by considering opportunities for stronger co-operation between and across scales as civic initiatives, coalitions and movements seek to deepen the practice of utopian food futures. As such, this article contributes unique insights into the ambivalences, dissonances and contradictions of CFNs to complement the international literature and the theme of this special issue and is informative for thinking about post-COVID food systems. It also contributes to developing the concept of ‘values-based territorial food systems’ by highlighting how the potential expansion of civic food *values* in Australia is enmeshed with a growing recognition of the need for action to redress inclusion and exclusion of *food network actors* across scales.

TABLE 1 Description of CFN case studies informing this study

Initiative type (data label)	Form of consumer-producer relations, role in civic governance	Established
[I1] Food hub	<i>Food connect</i> : Community supported agriculture; solidarity finance of community-owned infrastructure; <100 km radius peri-urban agroecological producers. Also run a not-for-profit foundation; active in policy advocacy, member of regional coalition and national movement leadership.	10+ years
[I2] Food charity	Community food pantry (<i>anonymous</i>), with some government funding for food charity services, mostly food boxes and cooked meals. Food is sourced from national food relief charities, donations, urban farms (see case 3) and some backyard production; citizen-consumers are drawn from homeless/disadvantaged groups, who also participate in preparing and sharing food.	15+ years
[I3] Urban farm	<i>Mini-farm project</i> : Not-for-profit community organisation using 'special purpose urban and peri-urban agriculture' to provide fresh produce for food charities. Producers are volunteers who convert underutilised urban space in Brisbane into urban farms; consumers are 'those in need' of food charity.	2015
[I4] Closed loop enterprise	<i>Loop growers</i> : Social enterprise, feeding a growing community of households and local businesses via chemical free, closed-loop agroecological system and knowledge exchange. Circular economy model collecting organic materials (food waste or yield) from cafes, bars and brewers which is then composted on-farm for production of bio-intensive market garden.	2017
[I5] Local food service provider	<i>Good food trailer</i> : Australia's first crowd-funded 'food trailer' supporting asylum seekers and refugees to gain employment and share cultural food knowledge. Associated with a highly regarded community enterprise co-operative supporting people with intellectual disabilities and/or mental health issues, GFT is staffed entirely by people with disadvantages.	2015
[C1] Coalition 1	<i>Brisbane</i> : Voluntary network of citizens, food system researchers, activists and policymakers, advocating for food justice and regenerative agriculture.	2018
[C2] Coalition 2	<i>Sydney</i> : Voluntary, nation-wide advocacy coalition of organisations, practitioners, health and community workers, and researchers working to ensure the right to food is respected, protected and fulfilled in Australia.	2015
[C3] Coalition 3	<i>Melbourne</i> : New food policy/governance group, supported financially by the City of Melbourne (local government), governed by 12 community leaders and specialists in food systems. Extends an alliance in operation since 2009.	2019
[M1] Movement 1	<i>Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA)</i> : National farmer-led organisation working towards a food system in which people can create, manage, and choose their food system. AFSA is an independent, not-for-profit association, not aligned with any political party.	2010
[M2] Movement 2	<i>New Economy Network Australia (NENA)</i> : Grassroots national advocacy and action network working to transform Australia's economic system so that achieving ecological health and social justice are the foundational principles and primary objectives, with food as one focal area.	2017

LITERATURE REVIEW

CFNs, transformation and scale

VTFNs – which include CFNs – have emerged as important sites for investigating the challenges and opportunities associated with food system transformation, highlighting the need for research to problematise the notion of ‘scaling-up’. As the international literature below suggests, it is not clear how or why scaling up is an appropriate strategy for transformative change, considering the challenges and limitations of doing so, nor whether this is desirable (Pitt & Jones, 2016).

CFNs include community gardens and urban farms, farmers’ markets, co-operatives and farm-gates, community supported agriculture schemes, food swaps, slow food, organics, food rescue charities and ‘local’ food service enterprises, as well as food-focused collectives such as policy coalitions, councils and advocacy alliances operating regionally, nationally and transnationally. The latter are said to connect place-based initiatives with more collective efforts to affect policy change, build networks, strengthen social learning and create opportunities for multiscale action around food systems reform (Friedmann, 2020; Lang et al., 2009). CFNs thus represent political strategies that operate at a range of scales and aim for a range of outcomes, yet remain embedded within ‘alternative’, ‘local’ or ‘short’ food networks – in short, VTFNs – that tend to share values based on proximity (i.e., local food), flexibility and co-operation, social justice, environmental sustainability, health and nutrition (Friedmann, 2007; Goodman et al., 2014). They also share some normative goals such as the promotion of agroecology, food sovereignty or food justice that elevate the aim of ensuring food access for all (Chappell and Schneider, 2016). These qualities have meant that scaling-up the pace, scope or impact of grassroots food initiatives, coalitions and movements is often (uncritically) adopted as a goal for transforming food systems towards sustainability and justice.

At the same time, a vast literature argues that assuming a linear trajectory – from local to other scales, or from niche to mainstream – and a positive normative framing for scaling is problematic (DeLind, 2011; Mount, 2012; Navin, 2015). While CFNs represent important ‘political actions at multiple scales’, they are also often ‘disconnected initiatives that have not yet resulted in system change’ (Blay-Palmer et al., 2016, p. 28). Niche innovations do not necessarily continue to deliver outcomes when scaled ‘out’ to impact greater numbers, at the same time as scaling ‘up’ to impact policy change means that the core values and objectives of VTFNs can become lost (Moore et al., 2015; Utting, 2015). For example, Connelly and Beckie (2016, p. 53) have observed how local food initiatives must often make trade-offs between increasing reach and ‘their commitment to values-based transformation of food systems’ (see also Beckie et al., 2012). Alongside problematic national-level policies, power imbalances between VTFNs and industry/corporations, limited public awareness, weak government capacity and the exclusion of marginalised voices, civic food leaders do not always have the strategic capacity (resources, relationships and skills) to scale out to policy spheres (Hoey and Sponseller, 2018). A further limiting factor also lies in transforming people’s values, cultural practices and relationships; what Moore et al. (2015) label scaling ‘deep’.

As Born and Purcell (2006, p. 195) correctly point out, ‘which goal is achieved will depend not on the scale itself but on the agenda of those who are empowered by the scalar strategy’. Consequently, the capacity for CFNs to redress inequalities within food systems has been mixed, especially around race, class, gender, ethnicity, citizenship, ability, religion or community (Horst et al., 2017). An enduring criticism of CFNs (and VTFNs more generally) is that they are predominately considered ‘a *White space*, with White bodies and associated White language, culture, delivery

of services, and food associated with White foodie culture' (Cohen and Reynolds, 2016 cited in Horst et al., 2017, p. 284). This has created a gap between the intent and outcomes of food justice (Allen, 2008), whereby political dimensions such as 'who participates in decision-making and whose rights and values are recognised' can be overlooked, leading to misrepresentation and limits to the creation of inclusive institutions (Moragues-Faus, 2017, p. 31; see also Hinrichs, 2010). The root causes of inequality can also be bypassed when local practices are privileged ahead of multilevel systems explanations, just as collective actors can also create or perpetuate injustices (Moragues-Faus, 2017; Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010). VTFNs at all scales must therefore more critically assess their contribution to redressing systemic inequalities related to historical and ongoing disadvantage, especially in relation to colonisation and the impoverishment of indigenous peoples (Horst et al., 2017).

In recognition of this, Utting (2015, p. 20) suggests that what is needed is 'integrated scaling up' – growing collective institutional forms without losing the core values and objectives of justice, solidarity and democratic participation. He argues that deeper transformation requires attention to both the micro level of (a) *broad, co-constructed principles* that subsequently enable multiple civic, state and private actors to agree upon policy directions (i.e., policy coherence), and the macro level of (b) *meaningful participation in collective action*, including strengthening voice, contestation, advocacy, co-construction, negotiation, networking, and building and sustaining alliances. These each have their own sets of complexities, constraints and trade-offs. This article applies this conceptual framework to unpack the micro and macro processes that connect civic food initiatives, coalitions and social movements, contributing a unique analysis of the challenges and opportunities for scaling up VTFNs in Australia to complement the existing literature (presented next).

Scaling up in Australia: challenges to initiatives, coalitions and movements

In Australia, bottom-up food initiatives have been steadily growing over the past two decades. Smith (2019) identified over 500 civic food initiatives and networks across Australia, although the actual number is likely much higher.⁴ Most are located in urban areas, and most emphasise some form of agroecological food production, farmer–consumer solidarity, improving food access and a concern with structural food systems reform. These have replicated and expanded substantially in recent decades as part of broader movements to reimagine food systems, particularly in urban contexts (Larder et al., 2012). However, changing the food system requires more than individual initiatives; 'it entails a complicated process that unfolds across a network of stakeholders' through a set of 'mutually supporting social relations' (Brislen, 2018, p. 106). Examining these social relations across scales has not been the focus of research in Australia to date.

Studies from Australia have mostly examined the growth and impacts of urban agriculture (i.e., community gardens) in capital cities Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra and Brisbane, exploring their visions and values (Canal Vieira et al, 2020), economic viability (Guitart et al., 2015), marketing (Mason & Knowd, 2010), city planning (Lyons et al., 2013) and local government connections (Thornton, 2017). Edwards and Mercer (2013) have contributed case studies that position food waste activism in the context of VTFNs, food justice and diverse economies. Larder et al. (2012) situate backyard gardening within broader rights and food sovereignty agendas. Research into food rescue charities⁵ has been critical of charities' tendency to 'deflect query, debate and structural action on food poverty and hunger' (Booth & Whelan, 2014, p. 1392). Recent studies have also con-

sidered food hubs, buyers' groups, farmers' markets and specialist retailers, revealing increased consumer and producer participation as well as limitations around affordability, actual contributions to food access, and environmental outcomes (Canal Vieira et al., 2020; Smith, 2019). In line with international findings, there are concerns that these types of initiatives benefit wealthier, white, middle-class consumers, and serve recreational, social and educational functions more than social justice aims (Guitart et al., 2015). Certainly, very few (if any) CFNs are historically or currently indigenous led, and there is increasing recognition that Australian food movements need to improve 'listening and learning and acting' with First Nations people (AFSA, 2021).

Beyond the local, regional coalitions such as the 'Right to Food Coalition', 'Melbourne Food Alliance', 'FairFoodAlliance.Brisbane' and 'Sustain' have emerged as key advocates for stronger partnerships between governments, community groups, researchers and activist organisations (Loff et al., 2008; McCartan & Palermo, 2016; Smith, 2019). These relationships reflect a plurality of individuals, groups or associations who are engaged in networks of alliances based on shared values and understandings that weave together to build movements (Diani et al., 2010). The 'Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance' (AFSA) is currently the only example of a truly national, food-specific civic alliance in Australia and is thus better described as a movement. Beyond its grassroots membership of farmers, advocates, researchers and citizen-consumers, AFSA is also embedded in a global network of food sovereignty organisations.⁶ Most recently, the 'New Economy Network Australia' (NENA) has emerged as a multiscale movement with connections to food system reform; being relatively new, no studies have examined its influence to date. These actors are supported by a growing body of ordinary 'food citizens' striving to create better food futures.

Very few Australian studies have examined the connection between local-level initiatives and the growth of regional/national 'umbrella organisations' representing a wider range of stakeholders, values, visions or interests in the food system. One exception is Parker and Morgan's (2013) study of the 'Sydney Food Fairness Alliance'. They argue that coalitions such as this have emerged with a view to move beyond single issues and an urban-elite focus, to address food access through the lens of rights and governance. Research in Victoria found a third driver of coalition formation: to work on systems level issues and influence government policy 'as a response to the lack of governmental bodies that can set or create food policy independently' (McCartan & Palermo, 2016, p. 917). Sippel and Larder's (2019) research demonstrated how rescaling the global concept of food sovereignty to better fit the Australian context has generated tension between rural producers and urban non-producers within the AFSA movement, drawing criticisms that the movement has become 'too local' and not sufficient to affect transformative change. Beyond these studies, there has been relatively little sociological analysis that considers how key CFNs in Australia have sought to collectively scale-up their visions and activities, and the contradictions and trade-offs they have experienced along the way.

METHODOLOGY

According to Olin Wright (2010, p. 10), building theories of social transformation requires us not only to diagnose and critique the current world, but also to analyse the 'obstacles, possibilities and dilemmas of transformation' experienced by emancipatory social innovations in the present, in order to expand these ideas into the future. This article therefore seeks to understand how Australian CFNs can sustain genuine food system transformation, developed through an analysis of how 'visions' of food justice have been mobilised and contested across scales, by whom, and with what impact on enabling collective action. This draws on the idea of 'food utopias', which

has emerged as an important theoretical and methodological lens through which to consider how various actors are re-imagining what a better food system might look like, in order to 'loosen the boundaries on whose ideas matter around food' (Stock et al., 2015, p. 4). This goes beyond utopias as purely imaginative spaces, arguing that investigating CFNs can help us to *critique* dominant food narratives, document *experiments* where food is being done differently, and explore how this is likely a messy *process* (Stock et al., 2015, p. 6).

In line with this approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten leaders of CFNs in Australia (Table 1). Participants were drawn from: five 'local' initiatives in Brisbane, including a community food hub (I1), food charity (I2), urban farm (I3), closed loop enterprise (I4) and local food café (I5); three 'regional' coalitions in Brisbane [C1], Sydney [C2] and Melbourne [C3]; and two 'national' social movement actors, the AFSA (M1) and NENA (NENA; M2). These sites⁷ reflect a diverse selection of current civic food experiments at local and regional scales, with AFSA and NENA being two of only three national level, citizen-led food movement organisations in the country. Cases were selected based on their goals of increasing access to healthy, locally produced food, social justice and environmental sustainability, and on their diversity of membership and impacts. Participants were identified using a combination of publicly available information, purposive and snowball sampling.

As presented earlier, Table 1 indicates how each case 'fits' with Renting et al.'s (2012) description of CFNs, thus positioning them as important examples of 'real food utopias' that we can learn from⁸ Stock et al. (2015). While the physical scale at which they operate organises my analysis of how visions are expressed and contested, I also recognise that 'interests are constituted at many different scales' (Cox 2002, cited in Goodman et al., 2014, p. 23). This article applies this perspective by focusing between and across scales, where visions are co-constructed, negotiated and contested as CFNs seek to contribute to wider transformations. All participants gave permission for details of initiatives to be published, however, the names of individuals have been removed to protect confidentiality.

Participants were asked to reflect on the histories of local food initiatives and the trajectories of regional/national alliances and coalitions, as well as their visions for future food system transformation. Interviews aimed to collect information about (i) goals, activities and outcomes of the initiatives, (ii) core values or concepts driving their vision for change; and (iii) challenges in scaling-up these visions. Interviews were conducted for 1–1.5 h, either in person or online, during August–December 2019 and May 2020.

Following Braun and Clarke's (2019) well-established methods for reflexive thematic analysis, interviews were transcribed and coded via an iterative process of open and axial coding. This generated 'patterns of shared meaning underpinned by a central meaning-based concept' (Braun and Clarke, 2019, p. 10) and resulted in themes that reflect agreements, contradictions and challenges in establishing shared goals and processes of scaling-up. Conceptually, this analysis was guided by the framework of 'integrative scaling-up' described earlier, with an emphasis on understanding obstacles to transformation central to the food utopias perspective. Utting's (2015) differentiation between micro and macro levels appropriately captured the subthemes in my data: defining scale, challenges in establishing shared visions (i.e., micro level), and strengths and limits of collectivism (i.e., macro level). In line with conventions for communicating qualitative findings, direct quotes from interviews are provided where they illustrate key themes identified via thematic analysis. This method is 'about telling "stories", about interpreting, and creating, not discovering and finding the "truth" that is either "out there" and findable from, or buried deep within, the data' (Braun and Clarke, 2019, p. 7) and is well-aligned with food utopia's emphasis on creating spaces for potentially contrasting visions for the future of food. The remainder of this article describes

participants' journeys through individual/local issues to a systems-justice approach that now permeates much of the regional and national level work, with focus on the main systemic challenge emerging from the data: representation and voice.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

(Micro) scaling-up: from sustainability to systems change and justice

Co-creating shared visions for food system transformation has been central to the trajectory of Australian VTFNs, but the process has been contentious. Within the civic food space, the 'need for more scaling up' [C3] was widely shared, although 'everybody comes with a different vision of what it should be' [C1]. Interviewees all described how Australian food initiatives have long mobilised around core sustainability issues of living within ecological limits, reducing fossil fuel consumption, health and nutrition and responding to climate change, in line with global sustainability challenges more generally – expressed as concerns with food miles, organics, healthy food access, food waste and environmental protection. This indicates the dynamic nature of scale, whereby 'local' issues are informed by contestations occurring globally (Wald & Hill, 2016).

A strong localisation discourse has ensued alongside the growth of urban agriculture in particular (Thornton, 2017), as has interest in improving economic returns to farmers and diversifying opportunities for urban consumers through food co-operatives and food hubs (Canal Vieira et al., 2020). Supporting findings by Guitart et al. (2015), here participants described visions of community building and education, improving health through fresh food consumption, building environmental diversity and resilience through permaculture, organics or regenerative agriculture, and enhancing sociocultural inclusion. Addressing food waste through community-based circular economy has been a significant recent addition to VTFNs in Australia. With such diversity across initiatives, growing the influence of the civic food message has required being able to define – and agree on – a shared language and simplified goals.

While some local market-based initiatives have certainly tried to replicate or spread to impact greater numbers, visions for systemic change have deepened, signalling efforts to socialise the wider food system. This was especially the case for people working on environmental issues and health – reflecting the early synergetic space between food and policy-making in Australia. All participants described how crises such as the current pandemic, but also wildfires, drought and floods that periodically devastate food and farming in Australia have influenced thinking about sustainable systems change. For example, one urban farmer described the shift as one 'where you think deeply enough that whatever you do now hasn't got negative ripple effects down the track [as well as] how do we engage people in this next phase' [I1].

Coalitions across scales have likewise been 'broadening [their] focus out from health to sustainable, healthy, equitable food systems' [I3]. There has been a deliberate attempt to 'try not to isolate food from all the other things that are so intrinsic to having a healthy food system' such as employment and housing [C2]. There is also 'more social justice emerging now [and] there's more right to food framing coming front and centre' [C3]. This was also articulated in the mission statements of the FairFoodAlliance.Brisbane as they advocate for a 'sustainable and just food system' [C1], and the Right to Food Coalition who argues for 'equitable access to nutritious food [and]everyone's right to food' (Right to Food Coalition, 2016). At the national level, the AFSA looks to the global food sovereignty movement as their guide, emphasising 'Everybody's right to food that's culturally appropriate and nutritious, produced in ethical and ecologically

sound ways, and our right to democratically determine our own food and agriculture system' [M1].

The NENA has also expanded the scope of civil society engagement by emphasising economic systems reform as the backbone for systemic transformation, with a number of grassroots-driven, geographic and sectoral 'hubs' focused on sustainable food, energy, transport, housing, indigenous economics and ecological economics (among others). NENA aims to reorient action beyond the food system and reconfigure the economic system through 'a small number of core goals that they can all band around, even when they are competitors: ecological health, social justice' [M2].

Interviewees further agreed that it has been relatively easy to build a broader appeal to addressing structural inequalities 'as being the fundamental building blocks of more sustainable, resilient, equitable food systems' [C3]. Broadening the problem framing to reveal its systemic or root causes is a widely documented strategy within literature on scaling (Utting, 2015), as civil society actors seek to encourage mainstream institutions to deepen their practices (Pitt & Jones, 2016). Establishing a shared normative framing through which to impact the deeper 'cultural roots' that shift problem domains has been more difficult, however. In Australia, this challenge hinges on contestation around food sovereignty, food justice and rights.

Reflecting earlier findings (Sippel & Larder, 2019), food sovereignty has not sat comfortably in the Australian context despite providing a strong counter-narrative to our history of large-scale agriculture usurping family farms, and the displacement of indigenous peoples and foodways through settler colonialism (see van Reyk, 2021). My interviews revealed food sovereignty to rarely be explicitly referred to by local level initiative actors. It was also contentious for coalition-level actors (who, perhaps not unrelatedly, identify more with policy and advocacy roles rather than as producers), with many preferring the language of justice and rights over sovereignty.

Still, questions such as 'Who produces food, how, and for whose benefit; Who makes decisions about what we eat and who profits from it; Where's the voice of the eater and the farmer' [C2] have empowered individuals and collectives, as this quote from a coalition leader demonstrates. While on one hand this suggests that the food sovereignty movement *has* been somewhat effective in bringing attention to agency and food democracy in Australia, it also illustrates the growth of food justice narratives at the level of micro norms and values. In Australia, food justice seems to have provided a stronger narrative for bridging trans-scalar discourses about food systems reform.

The issue of food relief is demonstrative here. Although Australians are increasingly aware of the growing problems of domestic hunger and food waste, many participants lamented the lack of critical public (and government) engagement in understanding the inter-scalar nature of hunger (individual), income inequality (socioeconomic) and food waste (systemic). Other contentious aspects of foodbanks include a concern with the nutritional content of food relief, over-reliance on charities by the government within a neoliberal welfare state model, and the negative social/cultural associations with receiving charity. In response, coalitions and movement actors increasingly ask about justice:

How do we talk about this without labelling people, how do we talk about this in a sensitive way that recognises all the complexity around food insecurity? Where does justice fit in and is justice a better way of talking about it? It's a lot about class and it's about socioeconomics, it's about social exclusion, it's about housing affordability. [C2]

Today, 'fair food' is the term preferred by coalition and movement actors as they seek to establish shared language, values and visions for food system transformation in Australia through a justice and equity lens. Although the term could be interpreted as replacing food sovereignty with a somewhat more reformist approach to food justice, participants all agreed that this strategic reframing (largely accomplished through AFSA, but now taken up across scales) has been crucial for coalition building beyond the local. Importantly, the 'fair food' banner has helped to establish shared proposals for structural level solutions (such as food hubs, agroecology, policy change) to systemic problems through the lens of justice (government inaction, racism and colonialism) in ways that are accessible to, and more inclusive of, broad rural *and* urban publics. For example, in an effort to go beyond the 'white, wealthy, urban, middle-class' demographic of many alternative food movements (Cadieux & Slocum, 2015), food access initiatives have also grown targeting migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, students, children and remote Indigenous communities, although these have not been widely studied. Case studies of initiatives I1, I2, I3 and I5 (refer Table 1) are examples of these kinds of initiatives in Brisbane. These experiments are valuable in that they seek to reclaim discourses of *hunger* within an Australian context focused on export-oriented food production at the expense of domestic food security.

At other levels, the past few years has seen complex food systems concepts such as circular economy, intersectional food justice (race, class, gender) and food citizenship increasingly expressed in multistakeholder policy-making experiments such as local/regional food plans and national 'fair food' convergences (Reeve et al., 2020). Promising experiments such as the Melbourne Food Alliance and City of Sydney's food systems work also demonstrate how the shared goals of 'fair food' are proving useful for the macro scaling-up of CFNs by enhancing collective action and enlarging public policy space.

Importantly, the turn towards 'fairness' has also brought into stark contrast the rhetoric of participation versus the reality of representation within CFNs across scales, reflecting the demand of food justice that 'disadvantaged communities benefit as much as or more than privileged people from efforts to strengthen local, healthy food systems' (Horst et al., 2017, p. 279). Two significant limitations associated with scaling up CFNs in Australia were identified: the level of engagement with Indigenous food sovereignty 'is nowhere near as deep or useful as it could be' [M1]; and addressing social inclusion, poverty and hunger 'hasn't been explicit' [C2]. All participants in this study agreed that these challenges affect the capacity for Australian CFNs to scale up in an integrative way, illustrating how opportunities for collectivism (macro scaling-up) have been constrained when key voices – those most affected by hunger, and indigenous peoples – are left out. This finding is discussed next.

(Macro) scaling-up: the challenges of representation and 'voice'

As fair food CFNs in Australia have gradually embraced a clearer food justice orientation, this has also forced them to address problems of representation, with two main sites of tension emerging in interviews. Civic initiatives, coalitions and movements have all had to grapple with the inclusion of (i) those most vulnerable to hunger and (ii) indigenous people.

In general, civic food coalitions agree that they have not done well in engaging with people who are most food insecure, such as urban and rural low-income earners or other subsets of the population such as migrants, refugees, youth, women and the geographically isolated (see Bowden, 2020). 'In all those challenges, [the Fair Food movement] doesn't really talk to people who are genuinely food insecure' [C2]. Some local level initiatives have done this work better, through their

connections with national food waste charities such as Foodbank, for example. One grassroots social enterprise explained how ‘working with people who haven’t necessarily always had the best access to food’ [I5] has strengthened networks with food charities, and thus, improved food access outcomes. However, charity networks also recognised that ‘there are always people who get left out’ [I2]. Other participants rejected food charities altogether, describing them as ‘not healthy’ [I4] or as ‘a broken system, a short-term band aid system’ [C1]. As found elsewhere (Lawrence et al., 2013), some participants blamed Australia’s neoliberal model of outsourcing welfare to the private or volunteer sector for the overrepresentation of emergency food relief responsibilities amongst homelessness organisations, community pantries and other social service providers who ‘shoulder a lot of that burden that should be being picked up by government’ [I5].

By contrast, coalition actors highlighted how many smaller charity organisations were time- and resource-poor, and so found it difficult to engage in policy advocacy with CFNs at other scales. For example, engagement between the FairFoodAlliance.Brisbane with homelessness organisations has only recently been established, despite many attempts at broadening out ‘beyond our own echo chamber’ [C1]. This seems to have been less problematic in Sydney and Melbourne, where civic alliances with local charities and governments have a longer history of collaboration.

Other food justice concerns – such as labour or land – have not really been addressed due to poor representation of marginalised groups within CFNs across scales. Alliances have more easily coalesced around health and nutrition, for which responsibility sits more neatly with defined government departments. Australia’s reliance on temporary, unskilled agricultural labour (i.e., migrant workers from the Asia-Pacific and/or young people on temporary ‘working holiday’ visas) has been recently exposed during the COVID-19 crisis, with reports of food going unharvested in fields because of a reduced foreign workforce. Likewise, the invisibility of poor labour conditions of food workers has been exposed during the pandemic crisis, a problem described by one food hub advocate as an extension of past labour abuses where workers were ‘contracted under a visa scheme and then basically imprisoned on a farm’ [I1].

The potential for CFNs to enhance the empowerment of women – who in Australia are 21% more likely to be food insecure than men (Bowden, 2020) – was discussed by three initiatives in this study (I1, I4 and I5). As one farmer noted, ‘a lot of new farmers are actually women’ [I4]; they also argued that their preference to keep their farm small is a way to challenge patriarchy that exploits both women and nature. Other initiatives directly include women as beneficiaries (i.e., as employees, consumers, farmers, chefs) in food-based social enterprises [I1], and one had prioritised women as co-owners through community financing and business decision-makers [I5]. In these examples, women and other people from diverse cultural backgrounds were described as important sources of social learning.

Considering the centrality of race-based inequality in food justice discourse internationally (Cadioux & Slocum, 2015), it is somewhat surprising that the second major constraint for Australian CFNs has been in engaging with Indigenous people and organisations – a problem identified by all participants in this study. This was captured in the statement: ‘We’ve seen little focus in the food systems space on our First Nations peoples – where are they within our focus as a food movement?’ [C3]. Local initiatives widely expressed respect for indigenous ways of knowing about food systems, environment and governance, but experienced difficulties in embedding this into how they do their work. As one farmer engaged in peri-urban agriculture explained: ‘[There] is a really strong, unfortunately frustratingly hard to attain, need for us to establish a connection with the Indigenous cultures of this landscape’ [I4].

They saw this as indicative of the historical failures of the movement, which if left unaddressed will be deeply problematic for the future scaling-up of CFNs, both strategically and normatively.

This supports Moragues-Faus' (2017) assertion that '*what* counts as justice and *who* counts as a subject of justice' matter greatly for progressing collective reframing towards food system transformation. Indigenous voices have largely been missing from collective food organising beyond the local, as a result of a deeper cultural 'discomfort' around Australia's colonial past (Mayes, 2018). This was explained by CFN leaders who recognised a lack of indigenous voices within their own organisations:

I always felt like, well, if you're going to talk about addressing food insecurity in Australia and you haven't got Indigenous voices involved, well, that's a problem. [C2]

We certainly do what we can to promote concerns around Indigenous food sovereignty or Indigenous rights more broadly, knowing that our authority or our engagement there is nowhere near as deep or useful as it could be. [M1]

Indigenous groups are definitely active in this space,⁹ but have only recently become more visibly, and equitably, part of 'fair food' organising outside of indigenous-only coalitions. This is because Indigenous knowledge and practice fundamentally challenge how collective civic food spaces should be structured and governed. This problem was described by movement leaders as one related to culture and power:

I wanted to have a space that wasn't just run by white fellas with black fellas coming in. They had a vision for what they wanted as First Nations people but very little support. [M2]

We've tried really hard with our Indigenous engagement [but] cultural differences make it hard to have an ongoing relationship with any particular [Indigenous] body to work on these issues. [M1]

An extensive literature has documented the ongoing exclusion of First Nations' peoples from land and food system ownership and governance in Australia, with implications for justice and food sovereignty. Mayes (2018) has highlighted the violence of settler-colonial dispossession of Indigenous peoples that is rarely acknowledged in discussions of food sovereignty, and how the political, ethical and legal 'right-ness' of food systems on stolen land has not been adequately dealt with by civic food movements. This is a problem with CFNs' approach to racial injustice in Australia at the current conjuncture; they need to 'unsettle' the history of settler-colonial agriculture and open up spaces for the discussion of competing sovereignties and rights. This requires processes that go beyond consulting Indigenous voices to 'let their ontologies and epistemologies set the terms and conditions of food sovereignty in Australia' (Mayes, 2018, p. 140; see also Staines & Smith, 2021). This challenge affects civic food actors at all scales, although with different points of emphasis. At the initiative level, one participant explained how learning from indigenous knowledge is crucial to farming:

We need to re-establish and reconcile our relationships with Indigenous people who still have knowledge, and even those that don't, and say here's this land here, come out, re-learn or teach and re-engage and reconnect. [I4]

Coalition actors also expressed a need for improving social learning about Indigenous foodways and were aware that this will shape the direction and collective capacity of civic food movements into the future. As the Melbourne coalition leader explained:

People are still grappling with, well, what does that mean for our focus, for the way that we work together, [and] for what might be useful issues to be looking at? The food movement at the moment is in that. We know we must change how we look at these issues, but what will we actually do? [C3]

Mann (2019, p. 4) has summarised this problem as one in which CFNs' emphasis on social learning and deepening democracy is juxtaposed against a situation in which the voices of ordinary people and diverse food advocates and practitioners struggle to 'converge in diversity to do the movement building necessary to bring about transformative change'. For example, while both AFSA and NENA publicly recognise that First Nations sovereignty has never been ceded, it is also the case that:

the concept of sovereignty is deeply unsettling for leaders because if you talk about it in Australia, you can't or you shouldn't be able to avoid talking about First Nations and you shouldn't be able to avoid talking about the fact that the land was stolen. [C2]

These findings illustrate that working in solidarity with Indigenous peoples' (and other marginalised/food insecure groups) represents a significant space for ongoing contestation and has become central to determining the trajectory of CFNs in Australia. I argue that by further politicising the inclusion of diverse food voices at the same time as progressing food justice associated with race, class, gender, ethnicity, colonisation, capitalism and nature, there is strong potential for CFNs to engage in more 'integrated scaling up' (Utting, 2015). We have already started to see CFNs deepening their own discourses of (multiple) sovereignties around the right to food, and a commitment to 'creating spaces where those civil society food movement actors and others have a genuine [and] powerful voice at the table' [C3]. Despite no right to food being currently afforded in Australia's constitution or other legal charters, it certainly reflects an emerging point of integration between fair food and other social justice movements.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has brought together the concepts of 'food utopias' and 'integrative scaling-up' to move beyond the hopeful visions of VTFNs themselves, by also analysing the voices that shape these visions. In doing so, the article has described the opportunities and challenges around strengthening collective food justice in Australia as ones that can be observed at both the micro level of values and visions, and at the macro level of enlarging opportunities for democratic participation and collective action. My findings highlight how strengthening CFNs depends on paying closer attention to whose values and needs are being represented within and across initiatives, coalitions and movements as they seek to scale up in ways that integrate values with process.

Understood here as a subset of VTFNs, civic food initiatives, coalitions and movements have demonstrated the power of utopian thinking and doing, in which they are 'actually constructing, creating what we want the future to look like' [M2]. But while the broad vision to ensure equitable access to food that is ecologically sustainable, healthy and fairly produced, exchanged and con-

sumed is generally shared, the adoption of specific guiding concepts – such as food sovereignty, food justice or advancing the right to food – has been contested. I found that although local initiatives focus on different problems (e.g., food waste, hunger, health, resilience, circular economy), establishing shared proposals for more transformative solutions at the systemic level has been crucial for coalition and movement building beyond the local. At the national level, while there is a clear agenda aligning with global food sovereignty and agroecology movements such as La Via Campesina, I argued that the adoption of ‘fair food’ across scales has been seen as a positive move in building shared values. However, determining the values to be shared and supported by diverse, multiscale, place-based-yet-systems-focused actors has been, and remains, controversial. Central to this has been the recognition of the need for CFNs to deal with the ‘historical disconnect with hidden hunger and big silence around dispossession’ [C2], which ‘fair food’ somewhat encapsulates. Indicating a shift towards food justice and rights, its value is that it remains open to contestation that is central to the politics of scale at any one point in time (Wald & Hill, 2016).

Whose visions for food justice and rights are being mobilised, however, when a significant challenge has been to ensure the representation and participation of important social groups who have traditionally not been part of civic food activism or policy-making in Australia – those who are most food insecure, and First Nations’ people? I have argued that those most ‘hungry’ in Australia have historically been situated within food charity networks, with limited opportunities to participate in collective efforts to address the causes of unequal food access. While a food justice re-framing goes some way to highlight race, class and gender dimensions of hunger in Australia, there remains deep contestation within and amongst CFNs around the place of food charities in a transformative civic agenda. This aligns with Renting et al.’s (2012, p. 292) important observation that CFNs encapsulate the hybridity of emerging initiatives, by blending ‘alternative’ and ‘mainstream’ elements as part of ‘an ongoing, incomplete transition process’.

I have also argued that the failure of the civic food movement to adequately grasp the implications of indigenous sovereignty (in general, and in relation to foodways) is a substantial and constant critique. Participants were acutely aware of the need for CFNs to address the rights and political sovereignty of Indigenous peoples, which are indistinguishable from the project of decolonising the very social and economic foundations in which food systems are embedded (Mayes, 2018). Improving the representation of indigenous people within advocacy and policy work (as well as research) remains a major barrier to transformative change.

In short, the experiences of VTFNs in Australia have illustrated how the construction of food utopias are both hopeful and fragile, not always successful, but certainly enlarging what we think possible. This can be observed at the micro level of values and visions, and the macro level of building opportunities for democratic participation. Collective visions for utopian food system change have been dynamic and are making some progress in bringing food together with other policy issues such as climate change, health, employment and human rights. It is also the case that shared values of justice have not been easily negotiated across scales of VTFNs, considering limitations associated with enlarging participation in networks that are not always inclusive. Still, as justice discourses have strengthened, so too has the reflexivity of civic food actors who seek to improve solidarity with marginalised voices on hunger and indigenous food sovereignty. Further strengthening collaborative opportunities between networks of civic food initiatives and coalitions within wider social and environmental justice movements – especially around poverty, human rights and indigenous sovereignty – signals an important opportunity for civic actors across all sectors in Australia to scale up (if, indeed, this is part of their vision). The time for this is now, considering the opportunity for re-envisioning food systems presented by COVID-19, and before the full effects of anthropogenic climate change exacerbate food system injustices further.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study has been conducted in accordance with the provisions contained with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and complies with the regulations governing experimentation on humans, ethical clearance number 2019000313. The author wishes to thank Camille Freeman, Alexa Birtasevic and Madeleine Borger for their assistance with data collection in this research. This research has been funded by Australian Research Council Discovery Early Career Research Award DE190101126, 2019–2023.

Open access publishing facilitated by The University of Queensland, as part of the Wiley - The University of Queensland agreement via the Council of Australian University Librarians.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

As a praxis-oriented food systems academic, the author has been closely engaged in research and advocacy with CFNs in Australia, including in regional food coalitions in Queensland and as a member of the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance. While this has shaped her subjective experiences and understanding of the research topic, the author remains independent from all initiatives included in the study with no financial or employment-related conflicts of interest to declare.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

ORCID

Kiah Smith PhD  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8707-0893>

ENDNOTES

¹ Food sovereignty is defined as ‘the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agricultural systems’ (Nyelini, 2007). As a radical, trans-local alternative to mainstream food systems, food sovereignty has successfully focused on smallholder agroecological practices and grassroots organising and has elevated the goals of diversity, inclusivity, democratic participation, human rights (to food, but also indivisible with race and gender) and collective rights (to housing, health and education). As the literature on food sovereignty is vast, it cannot be repeated here, see Edelman et al. (2014); Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck (2011) and McMichael (2014). For a connection of food sovereignty to food utopias, see Wald (2014).

² Food justice is defined as an approach ‘in which power and material resources are shared equitably so that people and communities can meet their needs, and live with security and dignity, now and into the future’ (Allen, 2010, p. 3). Again, the literature on food justice is vast and cannot be commented here. For more discussion see Allen (2008); Dixon (2014), Clendenning et al. (2016) and Gottlieb and Joshi (2010).

³ A wide literature examines the relationship between social movements, coalitions and initiatives, which cannot be adequately examined here. For this article, however, I take Diani’s (1992, p. 13) epistemological starting point whereby movements can be seen as networks of interactions between a plurality of individuals or groups who are engaged in social conflict on the basis of a shared collective identity. See also Diani et al. (2010) and Fox (2010) for literature on social movement formation that highlights the need for shared values and joint action as key elements connecting individuals, networks, coalitions, alliances and social movements as they work towards common goals.

⁴ It is beyond the scope of this article to examine the full breadth of all of these, not least also because no comprehensive, national-level database exists to track the number of civic food initiatives in Australia. The closest approximation can be made from the websites of the Australian Community Gardens Network <https://www.communitygarden.org.au/> and Sustain Australia <https://www.sustain.org.au/>.

- ⁵These represent Australia's primary response to the interconnected issues of food waste and food insecurity, due to its primarily neoliberal approach to food security and welfare provision (Richards et al., 2016).
- ⁶AFSA is a member of the 'International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty', 'La Via Campesina' peasant movement, 'Urgenci: The International Network for Community-Supported Agriculture', and have a seat at the 'Civil Society Mechanism' of the FAO Committee on World Food Security (AFSA, 2020)
- ⁷These cases are not claimed to be representative or exhaustive of the scope of VTFNs/CFNs in Brisbane or Australia. They have been selected from a larger sample of participants and initiatives who are contributing to an on-going Australian Research Council-funded project.
- ⁸These characteristics align the selected sample with the definition of VTFNs and CFNs given previously, but do not infer value judgements (by the research team) about how 'utopian' these actors' perspectives on scaling might be.
- ⁹Examples of Indigenous-led initiatives for food justice/sovereignty include *Yuri Muntha Gamu* (<https://www.yurimunthagamu.com/>), *Black Duck Foods* (<https://blackduckfoods.org/>) and *SEED Indigenous Youth Climate Network* (<https://www.seedmob.org.au/>). While some similar indigenous advocacy groups participate in the larger ARC study that this article draws on, they were not part of the data collection that informed the analysis presented here.

REFERENCES

- Allen, P. (2008) Mining for justice in the food system: Perceptions, practices, and possibilities. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 25, 157–161.
- Allen, P. (2010) Realizing justice in local food systems. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 1–14.
- Atekar, S., & Myers, J. (2020) The tale of two community gardens: Green aesthetics versus food justice in the big apple. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 37, 779–792.
- Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (2020) Website: About, <https://afsa.org.au/about/>.
- Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (2021) Website: First Peoples First, <https://afsa.org.au/blog/2021/07/03/first-peoples-first/>.
- Beckie, M., Huddart Kennedy, E., & Wittman, H. (2012) Scaling up alternative food networks: Farmers' markets and the role of clustering in western Canada. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 29, 333–345.
- Blay-Palmer, A., Carey, R., Valette, E., & Sanderson, M. (2020) Post COVID 19 and food pathways to sustainable transformation. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 37, 517–519.
- Blay-Palmer, A., Sonnino, R., & Custot, J. (2016). A food politics of the possible? Growing sustainable food systems through networks of knowledge. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 33(1), 27–43.
- Booth, S., & Whelan, J. (2014) Hungry for change: The food banking industry in Australia. *British Food Journal*, 116(9), 1392–1404.
- Born, B., & Purcell, M. (2006) Avoiding the local trap: Scale and food systems in planning research. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 26, 195–207.
- Bowden, M. (2020) Understanding food insecurity in Australia. CFCA paper no.55, Child Family Community Australia (Canberra: Australian Institute of Family Studies) Accessed 30/09/2020, https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/sites/default/files/publication-documents/2009_cfca_understanding_food_insecurity_in_australia.pdf.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019) Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589–597.
- Brislen, L. (2018) Meeting in the middle: Scaling-up and scaling-over in alternative food networks. *Culture, Agriculture, Food and Environment*, 40(2), 105–113.
- Cadieux, K., & Slocum, R. (2015) What does it mean to do food justice? *Journal of Political Ecology*, 22(3), 1–26.
- Canal Vieira, L., Serrao-Neumann, S. & Howes, M. (2020) Daring to build fair and sustainable urban food systems: A case study of alternative food networks in Australia. *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems* (online).
- Carey, R., Caraher, M., Lawrence, M., & Friel, S. (2015) Opportunities and challenges in developing a whole-of government national food and nutrition policy: Lessons from Australia's National Food Plan. *Public Health Nutrition*, 19(1), 3–14.
- Chappell, M.J., & Schneider, M.L. (2016) The new three-legged stool: Agroecology, food sovereignty and food justice. In M. Rawlinson and C. Ward (eds) *The Routledge Handbook of Food Ethics* (ch 39), London: Routledge.

- Clendenning, J., Dressler, W., & Richards, C. (2016) Food justice or food sovereignty? Understanding the rise of urban food movements in the USA. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 33, 165–177.
- Connelly, S., & Beckie, M. (2016) The dilemma of scaling up local food initiatives: Is social infrastructure the essential ingredient? *Canadian Food Studies*, 3(2), 49–69.
- Davy, D. (2016) Australia's efforts to improve food security for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. *Health and Human Rights Journal*, 18(2), 209–218.
- DeLind, L. (2011) Are local food and the local food movement taking us where we want to go? Or are we hitching our wagons to the wrong stars? *Agriculture and Human Values*, 28(2), 273–283.
- Diani, M. (1992) The concept of social movement. *Sociological Review*, 40, 1–25.
- Diani, M., Lindsay, I., & Purdue, D. (2010) Sustained Interactions? Social movements and coalitions in local settings. in N. Van Dyke and H. McCammon (eds) *Strategic Alliances*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 219–238.
- Dixon, B. (2014) Learning to see food justice. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 31, 175–184.
- Dixon, J., & Richards, C. (2016) On food security and alternative food networks: Understanding and performing food security in the context of urban bias. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 33, 191–202.
- Edelman, M., Weis, T., Baviskar, A., Borrás Jnr, S. M., Holt-Gimenez, E., Kandiyoti, D., & Wolford, W. (2014) Introduction: Critical Perspectives on food sovereignty. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 41(6), 911–931.
- Edwards, F., & Mercer, D. (2013) Food waste in Australia: The freegan response. *The Sociological Review*, 60(S2), 174–191.
- FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO (2020) *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020: Transforming food systems for affordable healthy diets*. Rome: FAO.
- Folke, C., Carpenter, S.R., Walker, B., Scheffer, M., Chapin, T., & Rockström, J. (2010) Resilience thinking: Integrating resilience, adaptability and transformability. *Ecology and Society*, 15(4), 20.
- Fox, J. (2010) *Coalitions and networks*. UC Santa Cruz Working Paper, available online <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1x05031j>, accessed 14/09/2020.
- Friedmann, H. (2020) Pandemic reflections from Toronto. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 37, 639–640, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-020-10098-6>.
- Friedmann, H. (2007) Scaling up: Bringing public institutions and food service corporations into the project for a local, sustainable food system in Ontario. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 24(3), 389–398.
- Geels, F., & Schot, J. (2010) The dynamics of transitions: A socio-technical perspective. in J. Grin, J. Rotmans and J. Schot (eds.) *Transitions to sustainable development: New directions in the study of long term transformative change*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 11–104.
- Goodman, D., DuPuis, M. & Goodman, M. (2014) *Alternative food networks: Knowledge, practice, and politics*. Routledge: London and New York.
- Gottlieb, R., & Joshi, A. (2010) *Food Justice*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Guitart, D., Byrne, J., & Pickering, C. (2015) Greener growing: Assessing the influence of gardening practices on the ecological viability of community gardens in South East Queensland, Australia. *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, 58(2), 189–212.
- Hinrichs, C. (2010) Sustainable food systems: challenges of social justice and a call to sociologists sociological viewpoints. *Sociological Viewpoints*, 26(2), 7–18.
- Hoey, L. & Sponseller, A. (2018) 'It's hard to be strategic when your hair is on fire': Alternative food leaders' motivation and capacity to act. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 35, 595–609.
- Holt-Gimenez, E., & Shattuck, A. (2011) Food crises, food regimes and food movements: Rumbblings of reform or tides of transformation? *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 38(1), 109–144.
- Horst, M., McClintock, N., & Hoey, L. (2017) The Intersection of Planning, Urban Agriculture, and Food Justice: A Review of the Literature. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 83(3), 277–295.
- Lang, T., Barling, D., & Caraher, M. (2009). *Food policy: Integrating Health, Environment and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Larder, N., Lyons, K. & Woolcock, G. (2012) Enacting food sovereignty: values and meanings in the act of domestic food production in urban Australia. *Local Environment: The International Journal of Justice and Sustainability* 19(1), 56–76.
- Lawrence, G., Richards, C., & Lyons, K. (2013) Food security in Australia in an era of neoliberalism, productivism and climate change. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 29, 30–39.

- Loff, B., Crammond, B., & McConnell, K. (2008) *Scoping a Food Policy Coalition: A Report to the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation*. Melbourne, VIC: VicHealth.
- Lyons, K., Richards, C., Desfours, L., & Amati, M. (2013) Food in the city: Urban food movements and the (re-)imagining of urban spaces. *Australian Planner*, 50(2), 157–163.
- Mann, A. (2019). *Voice and Participation in Global Food Politics*. London: Routledge/Earthscan.
- Mason, D., & Knowd, I. (2010) The emergence of urban agriculture: Sydney, Australia. *International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability*, 8(1), 62–71.
- Mayes, C. (2018) *Unsettling Food Politics: Agriculture, dispossession and sovereignty in Australia*. Sydney: Rowman and Littlefield.
- McCartan, J., & Palermo, C. (2016) The role of a food policy coalition in influencing a local food environment: An Australian case study. *Public Health Nutrition*, 20(5), 917–926.
- McMichael, P. (2014) Historicizing food sovereignty. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 41(6), 933–957.
- Moore, M.-L., Riddell, D., & Vocisano, D. (2015) Scaling out, scaling up, scaling deep: Strategies of non-profits in advancing systemic social innovation. *The Journal of Corporate Citizenship*, 58, 67–84.
- Moragues-Faus, A. (2017). Problematising Justice Definitions in Public Food Security Debates: Towards Global and Participative Food Justices. *Geoforum; Journal of Physical, Human, and Regional Geosciences*, 84, 95–106.
- Mount, P. (2012) Growing local food: Scale and local food systems governance. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 29, 107–121.
- Navin, M. (2015) Scaling-up alternative food networks. *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 46(4), 434–448.
- Nemes, G., Reckinger, R., Lajos, V., & Zollet, S. (2023) ‘Values-based Territorial Food Networks’—Benefits, challenges and controversies. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 63, 3–19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soru.12419>
- Nyelini (2007) *Declaration of Nyeleni*. Accessed 10 September 2020. <https://www.nyeleni.org/spip.php?article290>.
- Olin Wright, E. (2010) *Envisioning Real Utopias*. London and New York: Verso.
- Parker, F., & Morgan, E. (2013) Hungry for Change: The Sydney Food Fairness Alliance. in Q. Farmar-Bowles et al. (eds) *Food Security in Australia: Challenges and Prospects*. New York: Springer, pp. 113–128.
- Pitt, H., & Jones, M. (2016) Scaling up and out as a pathway for food system transitions. *Sustainability*, 8, 1025–1041.
- Reeve, B., Thow, A.M., Baker, P., Hresc, J., & May, S. (2020) The role of Australian local governments in creating a healthy food environment: An analysis of policy documents from six Sydney local governments. *Australian New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 44(2), 137–144.
- Renting, H., Schermer, M., & Rossi, A. (2012) Building food democracy: Exploring civic food networks and newly emerging forms of food citizenship. *International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food*, 19(3), 289–307.
- Richards, C., Kjærnes, U., & Vik, J. (2016) Food security in welfare capitalism: Comparing social entitlements to food in Australia and Norway. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 43, 61–70.
- Right to Food Coalition (2016) Position Statement: The right to eat well, no matter where you live https://righttofoodcoalition.files.wordpress.com/2016/04/rtf-final_food-access-in-aus_18-april-2016.pdf (accessed 10/9/2020).
- Sippel, S.-R., & Larder, N. (2019): Bridging divides: Constructing food sovereignty in Australia. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2019.1655638>.
- Smith, K. (2019) Localising SDG2 Zero Hunger through ‘fair food’ in Australia. *Asian Development Perspectives*, 10(2), 135–148.
- Staines, Z. & Smith, K. (2021) Workfare and food in remote Australia: ‘I haven’t eaten... I’m really at the end...’. *Critical Policy Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2021.1893198>
- Stock, P., Carolan, M., & Rosin, C. (2015) *Food Utopias: Reimagining citizenship, ethics and community*. London: Earthscan.
- Thornton, A. (2017) The Lucky Country? A critical examination of community gardens and city-community relations in Australian cities. *Local Environment*, 22(8), 969–985.
- UN DESA (2020) *Sustainable Development Outlook 2020, Achieving SDGs in the wake of COVID-19: Scenarios for policymakers*. New York: UN DESA.
- Utting, P. (2015) *Social and Solidarity Economy: Beyond the fringe*. London: Zed Books.
- Van Reyk, P. (2021) *True to the Land: A history of food in Australia*. London: Reaktion Books.

- Wald, N. (2014) Towards utopias of prefigurative politics and food sovereignty: Experiences of politicised peasant food production. in P. Stock, M. Carolan and C. Rosin (eds) *Food Utopias: Reimagining citizenship, ethics and community*. London and New York: Earthscan. pp. 107–125.
- Wald, N., & Hill, D.P. (2016) 'Rescaling' alternative food systems: From food security to food sovereignty. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 33, 203–213.

How to cite this article: Smith, K. (2023) Scaling up civic food utopias in Australia: The challenges of justice and representation. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 63, 140–159.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/soru.12368>